



Doing
the
Most
Good

The Salvation Army-Family Intervention Services The Independent Living Skills Program



NA HO`OLA PONO

“Moving Towards a Life of Righteousness”

My Super Social Worker

We all can agree that being placed in foster care can be a very unpleasant experience. Just the average adolescent youth complains about practically everything around them and our youth in foster care is no different. One of the multiple things that our youth complains of, is their dreaded social worker. At one of our group's gathering, we discussed with our group, if you could create a Super Social Worker, what would that person possess to be that AWESOME Social Worker that you and other foster youth needs and deserves? We passed out a questionnaire and they were asked, **“If I had the power to create a super social worker, this person will have to be...”** JL from Pahoa: They would have to be caring, responsible and honest. They will need to be fun to be around, nice and understanding. They will need to be able to do their job and be able to connect and communicate well with us. KP from Pahoa: I would like my social

worker to be respectful, considerate of my feelings and thoughts, accepting me for who I am. I want to feel that this person is helping me with the stuff I want most and not saying they understand if their actions say otherwise. We also asked, **“If you had the social worker of your dreams, how would this super social worker benefit you and others like you?”** ES from Hilo: This person would help me to do what I want out of life and to achieve my goals that I want to accomplish in my future. KP from Pahoa: This social worker would help me and others like me by trying their hardest to help us make our dreams come true without criticizing our choices. KJ from Kea`au: “I just want a social worker that returns my phone calls. For me to call my social worker I really must need something or I need help. When they don't call back, I feel like they don't care enough to even check what it is that I may need. I don't call my social worker anymore, which then means I cannot de-



pend on them too”. We then asked our participants, **“Do you think you could or couldn't do the job your social worker has currently? Why or why not?”** ES from Hilo: I don't think that I could be a social worker, because it is a very hard job. I would have to be working all the time. KP from Pahoa: I think I could because I know whatever I put my mind to, I can do and oftentimes with the needed passion. I am a determined person. That's what would make a successful social worker, my determination and passion. I know I would be able to do the job, because I know what it feels like to feel unloved, abnormal and at times, being a foster youth makes you feel like you are nothing. Do I sense the making of a super social worker in the near future.

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Services
Na Ho`ola Pono
Independent Living Program

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Mission Statement

“To provide youth with skills for a healthy life and to instill purpose, hope and vision to youth and their families.”



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Na Ho`ola Pono
Independent Living Program

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Spring Beach Break

On April 3, 2009, we planned a beach activity at Hapuna Beach Park. It was the last day of Spring Break and the ILP program on the Big Island wanted to do something special. We decided to plan a beach activity with the intent of bringing some of our youth together from both sides of the island. Who knows better about the plight of being in foster care than the foster youth themselves.

For some of our ILP youth from Hilo, pick up for transportation started at 6:30 in the morning. We had several pick up sites, picked up our lunches for the day and left Hilo at 8 a.m.

Two vans packed with youth, lunches, drinks and yes, boogie boards, and we were on our way to enjoy the last day of the Spring Break. We had arrived at Hapuna Beach Park a little past 10 a.m. to find the large pavilion taken. Disappointed we searched the park and was lucky to find another pavilion that was better suited for the group we had that day. The Kona ILP group arrived later than expected and we



"Get to Know One Another" Ice Breaker game brought two groups together that then became one.

started after their arrival. We saw that the youth were apprehensive of one another. We anticipated that and had planned an Ice Breaker for our participants to get to know one another better. One of the ways of breaking down each other's defenses is to incorporate laughter. Playing

our introduction game brought laughter out of our attending youth and within 10 minutes you could see the youth relaxing and feeling more comfortable with one another. Besides playing the game and giving our youth the opportunity to get to know one another better, it also gave them the opportunity to form groups for the next activity. In preparing for the beach activity, several weeks ago the youth all started to create game

boards based on graduating from high school. Each game board consisted of game squares, benefit & consequence cards and a start and finish. The youth were given basic instructions and left to design and create their boards. At each ILP high schools, we processed in our groups the things that either helps or prevent us from graduating. From there the youth then put together a list that they used in developing their benefit and



Playing a new game and meeting new friends too. Cool.

consequence cards. The boards' creativity reflected the creative skills of the different schools and groups. Some created their boards using a drawing of the big island as their game board. Some created their boards using stars and clouds. Each group had the time and opportunity to play different game boards before lunch. For all the students, it was worth all the time and effort in creating the boards and watching others playing and enjoying the games that

were created by them. This activity was so impacting, thoughts of maybe creating a professionally done board and donating it to DHS-CWS funded

programs working with foster youth. One of the purpose of bringing our youth together was that some of them believe some of the hardships they are experiencing being placed in foster care are only isolated to them. When we bring foster youth together, it becomes apparent to

each youth that their experiences are not only isolated to them. This activity was not really resolution based, but if we can share the burdens we all carry, it makes it easier for each of us to endure. One perfect example of this was a youth from Hilo that was recently placed with a vegetarian family who loves eating meat. She felt that she was the only one who was place inappropriately. She blew her mind meeting another meat loving youth from Kona who also was placed with a vegetarian family. Once they found this out, they spent most of the afternoon trading their vegetarian stories. In their conversation, they found out they had a lot more in common than their placement issues.

We'd like to provide more activities like this and build a stronger bridge between East and West Hawaii. It was a very successful event that will only get better.



Perfect way to end the last day of Spring Break at Hapuna Beach. Mahalo for an Awesome day.

Knowing That You Can Get Through is Different Than Thinking You Can Get Through

By Kashyla Penovaroff

I know what it's like to be angry all the time and believing that no one loves or cares for you. I found that it's not always true, but for a long time I thought that no one loved me. Being placed in the foster care system had further reinforced in me that no one cared or loved me. What I failed to realize was through it all, I had people thinking of me and it was because I refused to open my eyes to what was in front of me, I became blinded to the people that really did love and care for me.

Before I was placed in the foster care system, I was born on the Big Island and lived in various places, but mostly resided in Hawaiian Beaches. I was the youngest of 7 and completely gullible. I was physically abused in my home. We were always surrounded by violence and drug abuse. My mother was never home to provide care for us as I found out at an early age what the word neglected really meant. Knowing this made me angry as to why this was happening and never answered. My mom was very selfish, sleazy and a drunk. Whenever she was home, she oftentimes brought home different men. Sometimes she wouldn't come home for days at a time, which meant we had to care for ourselves, sometimes without eating because there were no food. As for my father, he was always mean and even denied that I was his child. It's the hardest thing to hear at 5 years old that your father denied I was ever his. The last time I seen my father was when he dropped me off with my mom. I remember that incident well as he beat my mother up in front of me and smashed the car windshield with me still sitting in my car seat. When he shattered the windshield I received several cuts. It was my older sister and my two older brothers who took care of me. They would always provide care for me and would even walk me to school come rain or shine. I could tell after awhile, caring for me took a toll on my older sister, but I knew she loved me after all I had put her through. I always got into fights and constantly teased that we were poor. Around Christmas time, we hardly

had any presents. If we did it was toys that some kid left at the dumpster or the CPS van would drop some presents to us, the unfortunates. We hardly had food in the house and rarely got any new clothes. Even though I always wished that I could have more, I now realize that things could have been worse.

When I went into foster care, I was 5 years old. That was a scary time in my life, but I was placed with my older brothers and sister. Little did I know that they would not always be there. We were placed together at first, but slowly were separated from one another. They were placed in several homes after they left me and from that point I realized I was on my own and feeling more alone than ever before. My anger prevented me from getting close to anyone. Anger overtook me and before I knew it, I was angry at everyone, even people I didn't know. Deep down I knew that it wasn't their fault, but being mean and angry just came natural for me. I became good at surrounding myself with walls and it helped me to survive without furthering the hurt. In protecting myself, people felt that I was cold hearted and didn't have any feelings. Eventually my older brother and sister were taken into guardianship by relatives, but no one wanted me because they considered me as the troubled one. I then went from foster home to foster home not knowing what house or what kind of people I was expected to live with.

I am now 15 years old and going to be 16 in October. I realize that I wasted 12 years of my life being blind to the things that could have created new beginnings for me. I ask myself, what is life without understanding and love? I finally decided to change who I had become when I was forced and placed in a program on O`ahu called, Ka Pa `Ola. There was this one staff named Beetle Dela Questa, She always seemed to make me mad, but one day she told me

how I was feeling deep down and that I had hated the world because someone hurt me. Her statement cut deep into me. I got mad, but that night when I laid down to sleep, I finally realized that being angry really was hurting me more than anyone else. I decided from that day on, I would try harder than I ever tried before. I completed the Ka Pa `Ola program and the staff there said that I was one of their best youth and how I had kept everyone together in the program. It felt good again to be needed and how good it felt to finally be me.

When I had completed the Ka Pa `Ola program, I was sad because I really didn't want to leave, but another miracle happened. When I was to fly back to O`ahu to attend the Ohana is Forever III conference, I sat next to an angel because someone took my seat. This angel was a man referred to as Uncle Kalani. He called it destiny and I knew he was right. Uncle Kalani told me something or rather the one thing that could make me cry, he told me that my older sister, who he had helped her with college and starting her new life, had always loved and cared for me. For the first time in a long time, I really cried for a good reason, because I knew then, someone really loved and cared for me. I had an instant bond with Uncle Kalani. He gave me hope that I hope everyone reading this will have. The ILP program will give you hope and I say this because I know the hope it has given me. It helped me and it should help you. All you have to do is give it a chance. Don't be afraid to take that important step. It might be big, but it's worth it. Knowing that you can get through is different than thinking you can get through.

Kashayla epitomizes the resiliency our youth in foster care has. Through all adversity they tend to find themselves. Hard lessons will make for better lives and better futures. I believe this youth will continue to grow and in turn, help others to grow too. Good Luck and yes, someone cares and loves you.

Why ILP?

There was a survey done several years ago. This survey was done due to the increasing number of people that were homeless. One of the factors that were discovered from the survey, 3 out of every 10 homeless were those that was once under foster care. It was an alarming statistic and one that caused the development and creation for independent living programs like ours nationwide. We asked our participants, before there were programs like ILP, what do you think are some of the reasons why 30% of the homeless population were at one time youth in foster care? **KP from Pahoa:** "I believe that before ILP, many foster youth became homeless because they didn't have the support that the young people have today. Many didn't have anyone to give them hope that they needed when they felt they were in a hopeless situation. All they are aware of is the negative

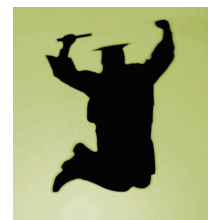
situation they are in and the negative image and labels we oftentimes get when people find out we are foster youth". **Another youth from Pahoa:** "Most of the foster youth that were homeless did not have the needed guidance and support that most ILP youth have today. They had no one that they could trust, encourage and help them through the rough times. They usually left the system without badly needed hope". **KL from Hilo:** "They didn't learn the vital skills that ILP teaches. There was no one to help become aware of their future options". We asked our ILP participants, Why do you think ILP is important for young people in foster care?

KP from Pahoa: "ILP is important because it gives youth in foster care hope and strength. Once we feel better about ourselves and go past the things that caused us to be placed in foster care, we can move on and start thinking about our futures instead of our past". **KL from Hilo:** "It's important when you have someone you can trust that you can talk to and can give you good advice when planning your future goals". **PA from Pahoa:** "ILP helps you focus on your future, where everything else in the system makes you focus on your past".

The majority of the youth we work with, not only has to live under the constraints of being a foster youth, but they also have to burden the negative stigma as foster youth that they endure because of the poor choices their parents have made. I always get asked the question when people find out that I work with foster youth, "Are the youth you work with bad?" I always reply, "No, they just come from bad parents and families".

I asked the question, How is ILP preparing you towards securing a better future for yourself? **KP from Pahoa:** "ILP is important to me because they help me to better cope with the system. The program gives me hope and helps me to realize the importance of planning for my future. The program helps give me the strength I need to fight for what I need in hopes of a better fu-

ture". **KL from Hilo:** "They taught me valuable life skills and help me achieve my high school goals. The program have helped me to gain valuable employment experiences, secure financial aid resources to attend college and help me secure student housing at the University of Hawaii at Hilo". **TH from Pahoa:** "ILP is helping me become a better person and one day, a better parent than my parents were for me". **KKW from Pahoa:** "ILP prepared me for college and the realities of life. Nothing is easy, but the more you know, you lessen the chances of being blindsided with the unknown". **PH from Pahoa:** "ILP helps us Stay the course, get valuable summer employment and realizing valuable housing and rental assistance resources". **PG from Pahoa:** "ILP pro-



gram and staff makes me feel like I am Somebody in this world. The ILP program makes me believe that I am not a loser and my future doesn't have to be the same as my past". **KL from Hilo said,** "The ILP program is great because of all the things I learned that will better prepare me towards future successes. Uncle Warren and Uncle Kalani have helped me towards achieving my post high options and now I am looking forward towards graduating and attending college in the fall." **KP from Pahoa said,** "After every storm when the weather clears, there's a rainbow that shines brightly for all to see. Some of us are not able to see the rainbow after the storm. I believe ILP helps us see that beautiful ending after the storm. ILP program helps us to also see the strength that comes from within us if we only look deep to see that it's really there. Since being in the program, I see less despair and more hope and faith in a better future. It's still difficult, but with ILP, I know I can attain my future goals".

Good luck to all



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Na Ho'ola Pono
"Moving Towards a Life of Righteousness"

ILP Heroes Corner

Mahalo Nui Loa to the following :
Sharon Hirota, Housing Specialist
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and Community Development
Anna Meade

Dept. of Labor & Industrial Relations
WorkForce Development Division

Mahalo Nui Loa

To all our ILSP participant schools
and the effective collaboration
developed between us

With Your Support, Our Youth has a
Chance Towards a Greater Future & Life